



CONCEPT NOTE- SIDE EVENT

Family Health Expo & Symposium

Date: 2nd August 2025

Venue: UMA Showgrounds, Lugogo

Time: 8:00am-1:00pm

Title for the Event: Harnessing young people's power: Advancing SRHR and climate Action through Policy and Practice in East and Southern Africa.

1.1 Introduction

PSD is a Women's Rights Organization working to promote women's Justice and Development in Uganda. The organization envisions a society without injustice, violence and poverty and the mission is to work with vulnerable communities to address social injustices, alleviate poverty and violence. PSD's program focus areas include; Access to Justice for Women and Girls, Women Rights and Gender Equity, Gender, Peace and Security, Gender and Economic Development, and Programme Quality Management and Organizational Development. Paradigm for Social Justice and Development (PSD), with funding from HIVOS, the SRHR Fund, and SIDA, is implementing the project titled: "Scaling Up Meaningful Participation of Girls and Young Women (GYW) in SRHR Decision-Making and Climate Change Adaptation Processes for Sustainable Development in Uganda.

1.2 Background and Rationale

Climate change is one of the most pressing global challenges of the 21st century, with direct and indirect impacts on human health, well-being, and socio-economic development. In sub-Saharan Africa, the dual challenges of climate change and unmet Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) needs continue to disproportionately affect young people, especially women and girls. The intersection between these two domains, climate change and SRHR, remains inadequately addressed in policy and program responses across the region.

Evidence shows that climate change exacerbates existing health inequities and increases vulnerabilities, particularly among women and girls. Climate-induced disasters such as floods, droughts, and cyclones often disrupt health systems, leading to reduced access to essential SRHR services, including contraception, maternal healthcare, and services to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. For instance, UNFPA (2021) reported that during climate disasters, the breakdown of health services disproportionately affects the delivery of SRHR services, contributing to higher risks of unintended pregnancies, maternal mortality, and sexual violence.

Countries in East and Southern Africa, particularly Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe have witnessed firsthand effects of climate change and access to SRHR for instance the recent recurrent floods and cyclones in Mozambique. After Cyclone Idai (2019), access to maternal health services was severely disrupted in

Mozambique, with thousands of women delivering without skilled care, increasing the risk of maternal and neonatal deaths (UNFPA, 2019).

Similarly, Uganda experiences climate-induced disasters like landslides and floods, which not only displace communities but also limit access to essential SRHR services. 33% of deaths in Uganda are from non-communicable diseases, yet climate change is worsening NCD risks through environmental stressors (Uganda Ministry of Health, 2023).

At the same time, youth under 25 years make up over 60% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa (UN DESA, 2022). Yet, their participation in policy development particularly in areas linking SRHR and climate change is minimal or tokenistic. Despite commitments like the African Youth Charter and Agenda 2063, meaningful youth engagement in policy-making remains under-supported. A 2022 report by the African Union Youth Envoy highlighted that youth across the continent face structural barriers in influencing policies on climate change, health, and SRHR due to limited access to decision-making spaces, capacity gaps, and inadequate resources.

Furthermore, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) underscores that integrating health, gender, and climate change interventions enhances resilience and sustainability. However, there is a significant policy gap in linking SRHR and climate adaptation strategies within national and regional frameworks in East and Southern Africa.

1.3 Objectives of the Event

- i. Identify and assess policy gaps in integrating SRHR within national and regional climate adaptation and disaster response frameworks.
- ii. Amplify youth voices by fostering meaningful participation in regional policy discussions on SRHR and climate change.
- iii. Foster multi-sectoral collaborations that bridge health, climate, and governance sectors to promote integrated responses, with a strong emphasis on youth engagement.

1.4 Contribution to the Family Health Expo & Symposium theme and Objectives

This side event links health innovation and policy by:

- Elevating meaningful youth participation in the design and implementation of SRHR and climate change policies..
- Exploring integrated approaches to ensure continuity of SRHR services during climate induced disasters..
- Promoting regional policy alignment and sustainable investment in youth-driven health and climate resilience initiatives.

1.5 Methodology

This interactive session will be hosted within the Family Health Expo and symposium. There will be two paper presentations and both will be discussed.

1. **Paper one: Bridging the Gap: Integrating SRHR Services in Climate Change Responses and Disaster Mitigation in East and Southern Africa**

The following topics will be discussed under paper one:

- Exploring the intersection of SRHR and climate change in policy and practice.
- Presenting case studies on SRHR access during climate-related disasters.
- Identifying policy gaps and opportunities for SRHR integration in climate adaptation frameworks.
- Examining financing mechanisms for SRHR in climate resilience strategies.

The proposed discussants/panelists for the paper

- Regional SRHR & Climate Advisor - UNFPA or Hivos to provide global and regional policy context
- Government Representatives - Ministry of Health/Environment Representatives from Kenya, Uganda, Malawi to share national level integration efforts and policy gaps
- Academic Expert from institutions e.g. Makerere /Lira University School of Public Health to present evidence and research on climate health linkages
- Youth Representative from a youth-Led Organization from Rwanda or Zambia focusing on SRHR and climate to bring grassroots and youth perspectives.
- NGO Leader experienced disaster response and reproductive health to highlight operational and field-based realities.

2. **Paper two: Beyond Participation: Strengthening Youth meaningful Engagement in SRHR and Climate Policy Formulation and Implementation.**

The topics of the paper include;

- Showcasing youth-led innovations influencing SRHR and climate policies.
- Highlighting effective models of youth engagement in policy formulation.
- Identifying barriers to meaningful youth participation in decision-making processes.
- Analyzing regional policy frameworks that enable or hinder meaningful youth participation.

The suggested panelists include;

- Youth Advocates from Uganda, Zimbabwe, South Sudan and Kenya to share firsthand experiences in advancing youth-led SRHR and climate actions and influencing policy.
- Policy Maker from EAC or SADC Secretariat to discuss regional commitments and gaps in youth engagement within inter-governmental frameworks.
- SRHR Policy Specialist to provide insight into how youth priorities can be reflected in the policy design and implementation.

- Regional Climate Justice Activist to connect youth movements for climate justice with SRHR advocacy and showcase inter-sectional approaches.

1.6 Target Participants

The hybrid regional networking event targets 100 participants from across East and Southern Africa. These will include young people, Girls and Young Women representatives, Stakeholders from SRHR and climate change sectors, academia, Like-minded CSOs, Government representatives, Media, Development partners and donors, General public.

1.7 Expected Outcomes

- Developing concrete strategies for integrating SRHR into national and regional climate policies and disaster response plans.
- Producing a youth-led position paper outlining policy recommendations for governments and regional bodies.
- Strengthened networks between youth-led organizations, government actors, and development partners
- Regional best practices shared on engaging youth in health and climate policymaking.
- Increased awareness among policymakers on the nexus between SRHR, climate change, and youth engagement.

1.8 Program Outline

Time	Activity	Facilitator/Speaker
08:00-9:00am	Arrival and Registration	PSD
9:00-9:15am	Opening Remarks	PSD, Ministry of Health Uganda & Uganda Healthcare Federation
9:15-9:30am	Keynote address “Young at the Crossroads of SRHR and Climate Action”	Hivos Representative
9:25-10:15am	Paper 1 presentation and panel discussion	Paper presenter: Panelists: Session chair:
10:15-10:45am	Q&A and Audience Reflections	Moderator/Session Chair
10:45-11:15am	Break tea	PSD
11:15-12:10pm	Paper II presentation and panel discussion	Paper presenter: Panelists: Session chair:
12:10-12:45pm	Q&A and Audience Reflections	Moderator/Session Chair
12:45-1:15pm	Summary of key takeaways, commitments & next steps	Moderator
1:15pm	Lunch and Networking	Hotel